Writing Successfully in Science; By Maeve O'Connor; HarperCollins Academic (distributed by Chapman & Hall); London, 1991; xi + 229 pages. £8.95

This book not only provides advice for all kinds of scientific writing, i.e. original papers, reviews, theses and posters, but also the preparation of slides and overheads. I even noted hints on the correct presentation of a c.v., which is welcome for this often presents students with some difficulty. I agree with virtually all the advice given and can only hope that the book will be widely read and inwardly digested. My concern is that those who are most in need of the advice will studiously avoid it. For my part I will be able to act positively in future and bring the book to the attention of the major offenders if I am still wide- enough awake at the end of a disastrous performance.

I noted three points with which I strongly agree. First, titles (p. 69) should not be framed in the form of claims. Such titles should be confined to the newspapers which are deservedly criticised for their misleading headlines. I could add that a paper should present a case as dispassionately as possible. Thus a phrase like 'the following experiments were performed to confirm our hypothesis' should be avoided. Second, do not over use nouns as modifiers (p. 104). The reader should not be expected to have to unravel 'a steroid-induced GABA channel burst duration prolongation', taking the example given. Third, do not hyphenate words at the end of lines; this has become more common with the use of word processors and causes the printer no end of trouble.

I hope that every science department will buy several copies of this low-priced book for it deals with a serious problem. Scientists tend to complain that they are ignored and yet too often they are incapable of explaining their work in an attractive and understandable way, even to their colleagues. Greater attention should surely be paid to presentation in all science courses. Some people are more gifted than others but it should be remembered that attractive writers and speakers take immense trouble and this is the root of the problem. As comedians know well, it is dangerous to adopt a throw-away air unless you have something terrific to throw away.

Peter N. Campbell

Booklist No. 108 July 1992

Adams, R.P. and Adams, J.E. (eds) Conservation of plant genes. DNA banking and in vitro biotechnology. From a meeting, London, Apr. 1991. Academic Press; San Diego, CA, 1991. xii + 345 pp. $45.00.

Ahuja, M.R. (ed.) Woody plant biotechnology. From a workshop, Placerville, CA, Oct. 1989. NATO Advanced Science Institute series A, vol. 210. Plenum; New York, 1991. xii + 373 pp. $95.00.

Amos, L. and Amos, W.B. Molecules of the cytoskeleton. Macmillan/ Guilford Press; London, 1991. 253 pp. £40.00; $50.00 (hbk). £18.99; $25.00 (pbk). Reviewed in: Nature, 7 May 1992, 357, 32 by T. Mitchison and Trends Neurosci., June 1992, 15, 234 by A. Matus.

Atassi, M.Z. (ed.) Immunobiology of proteins and peptides. VI. Human immunodeficiency virus, antibody immunoconjugates, bacterial vaccines and immunomodulators. From a symposium, Scottsdale, AZ, Oct. 1990. Advances in experimental medicine and biology, vol. 303. Plenum; New York, 1991. xiv + 298 pp. $79.50.

Austen, B.M. and Westwood, O.W.R. Protein targeting and secretion. IRL Press; New York, 1991. x + 85 pp. £6.50.

Baeyens, W.R.G., De Keukeleire, D. and Korkidis, K. (eds) Luminescence techniques in chemical and biochemical analysis. Dekker; Basel, New York, 1991. xv + 654 pp. $150.00 (USA and Canada); $180.00 (elsewhere). Reviewed in: Trends Biochem. Sci., Apr. 1992, 17, 167 by R.J.C.

Bassindale, A.R. and Gaspar, P.P. (eds) Frontiers of organosilicon chemistry. The Royal Society of Chemistry; London, 1991. ix + 410 pp. £52.50.

Bennett, J.W. and Lasure, L.L. (eds) More gene manipulations in fungi. Academic Press; San Diego, CA, 1991. xiv + 470 pp. $75.00.

Bertini, I., Molinari, H. and Niccolai, N. (eds) NMR and biomolecular structure. VCH; New York, 1991. xvii + 209 pp. DM 116.00; £43.50. Reviewed in: Trends Biochem. Sci., Apr. 1992, 17, 166 by P. Morris.

Bills, D.D. and Kung, S.-D. (eds) Biotechnology and nutrition. From a symposium, College Park, MD, 1991. Butterworth- Heinemann; Stoneham, MA, 1992. x + 468 pp. $59.95.

Bray, D. Cell movements. Garland; New York, 1992. 406 pp. $44.95 (hbk); $27.95 (pbk). Reviewed in: Nature, 7 May 1992, 357, 32 by T. Mitchison.

Broach, J.R., Pringle, J.R. and Jones, E.R. (eds) The molecular and cellular biology of the yeast saccharomyces. Vol. 1. Genome dynamics, protein synthesis and energetics. Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press; Cold Spring Harbor, New York, 1991. 826 pp. $97.00 (hbk); $55.00 (pbk). Reviewed in: Nature, 21 May 1992, 357, 206 by D. Wilkie.

Brosius, J. and Fremeau, R.T. Molecular genetic approaches to neuropsychiatric diseases. Academic Press; San Diego, CA, 1991. xxii + 493 pp. $69.95.

Brown, R.C., Hoskins, J.A. and Johnson, N.F. (eds) Mechanisms in fibre carcinogenesis. From a workshop, Albuquerque, NM, Oct. 1990. NATO Advanced Science Institutes series A, vol. 223. Plenum; New York, 1992. xiv + 589 pp. $135.00.

Brugge, J. et al. (eds) Origins of human cancer. A comprehensive review. From a meeting, Cold Spring Harbor, NY, 1990. Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press; Cold Spring Harbor, NY, 1991. xviii + 904 pp. $80.00.